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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/31/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KNAR](#) [PHUM](#) [GM](#)  
SUBJECT: DEMARCHE RESPONSE: URGING FASTER PROCESSING OF  
RESTITUTION CLAIMS

REF: SECSTATE 23500

Classified By: Acting Political Minister-Counselor Stanley Otto for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Poloff met March 12 with the head of the German Finance Ministry's Nazi-era restitution section, Dr. Hermann-Josef Rodenbach, to deliver reftel points. Dr. Rodenbach welcomed USG efforts to encourage the Finance Ministry to move faster on processing restitution claims stemming from the Nazi-era. He readily agreed that it is in the German government's interest to settle accounts sooner rather than later since, as he claimed, the German government pays 6% interest on cases in which it owes claimants. He also confirmed that restitution cases stemming from former East Germany tend to take a longer period of time to be resolved.

¶2. (C) Dr. Rodenbach also expressed concern about overall planned personnel reductions in the Finance Ministry and in his section in particular. To help him maintain his section's personnel level, Rodenbach suggested that the appropriate USG official send a short letter to Onno Hueckmann at the MFA's Legal Department -- who would then pass it on to the Finance Ministry -- describing our interest in speedy restitution and our concern that restitution cases could drag on beyond the lifetime of claimants. Poloff spoke to Federal Chancellery Liaison desk to religious communities Rudolf Teuwsen on March 19 regarding reftel and possibility that Washington would be sending a letter to the Ministry of Finance on this issue. Teuwsen took these points in and said he would refer the message to higher levels in the Chancellery. He also indicated that the rate of claim dispensation was currently problematic.

TIMKEN JR